

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religious Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

Number 228

MARCH 16th, 1944

THE CHURCH'S PREPARATION FOR THE FORCES' RETURN

In his Diocesan Letter for March, the Bishop of Rochester, Dr. C. M. Chavasse, writes:—

"I would ask every incumbent and every Parochial Church Council to consider earnestly how they can prepare for the return of the members of their parish after the war; and to set up an organisation that shall be effective when the time comes. I would make the following suggestions:—

"1. After the manner of our A.R.P. Service, there should be Street or District Wardens to give notice to the incumbent and to the Reception Committee of returning men and women in their area. Such Street Wardens could get busy immediately by giving notice of those who come home on leave, that they may at least receive a handshake, and return to duty with the memory of a prayer offered on their behalf.

"2. All Army Chaplains have received orders to inform parish priests at home of those men who have given them help in their ministry, or who have responded to their ministrations.

"The Reception Committee (in most cases this will have been done already) should compile a list of all those away on National Service; and (what is more important) take steps to keep in touch with them, and commend members of the congregation to the Chaplains of their unit or the Vicar of the parish where they lodge.

"3. Soldiers will have found new reality and real enjoyment in the Services provided for them in the Field. The Reception Committee should consider how our Church Services at home can be made more vital, and so attract and hold these men when they return.

"4. There is no doubt but that the 'Padre's

Hour' (when each week the men of a unit meet the Chaplain, and religious questions are asked and discussed) has proved extraordinarily successful and useful. We must be prepared, therefore, to make Group Discussion an important feature of parochial organisation after the war.

"5. There will be a host of problems and difficulties (chiefly of a domestic character) to be faced when normal life is resumed with peace. There is need of Councils of Help and Advice, which should be central rather than parochial. For this work the co-operation of doctors, lawyers and of men and women of affairs and of experience, is required if a parish priest is to be in a position to cope effectively with what must be for a time a chaotic situation."

THE PADRE'S HOUR Bishop of Ripon's Hope for Peace-time Use

In a recent Diocesan letter, the Bishop of Ripon, Dr. Geoffrey Lunt, gives some comments on the Padre's Hour, and its possible application to peace-time conditions.

"The Padre's Hour is one of the really good things that has been born in this war. It answers two needs which our parochial organisation at home seldom meets as effectively. In the first place it gives the ordinary layman, who is not prepared to accept statements solely on authority, the opportunity to see and hear his Padre on equal terms: and not from the comfortable security of the pulpit. It is comparatively easy for the parson to be dogmatic in the pulpit where no one can answer him back: but pulpit dogmatism no longer carries the weight it once carried. In the freer atmosphere of the Padre's Hour the ordinary man can ask questions and give expression to his difficulties, and the Padre and the layman can take up the search for Truth and tread the road together.

Distributed by

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

An Agency of The British Government

30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

"In the second place, there are scores of men outside organised religion who go only very occasionally to a Church Service; and when they do go, they hear a sermon which is primarily addressed to 'the faithful'—often on some aspect of applied Christianity—and it all seems out of reach and above the head of the ordinary, non-Churchgoing layman, because it makes assumptions which he neither understands nor admits.

"I met many men who were in this difficulty on my tour of M.E.F. No one ever tells us how or where to begin to be a Christian. All your sermons are based on the assumption that we understand Christian phraseology and that we have, as a background, some conception or understanding of the cardinal Christian doctrines. If only you would sometimes begin at the beginning, for the benefit of the likes of me!" So spoke one young officer to me in Syria and scores of other officers and men spoke in similar strain.

"Now in the Padre's Hour it is possible and easy for the Chaplain to begin at the beginning and to lay again the foundations which, even if laid in Sunday School, were soon afterwards grown over and lost to sight because no superstructure had been built upon them.

"From Chaplains at home and overseas comes abundant testimony to the tremendous value for their pastoral and evangelistic work of the Padre's Hour.

"I think that in our parishes at home we must try and discover some similar technique which may bridge the gap between 'the faithful' and 'the man on the edge.'"

GROWING INTEREST IN B.B.C.'S RELIGIOUS TALKS

A B.B.C. Listener Research investigation shows there has been a distinct change in the attitude of the listening public towards Religious Talks and Discussions over the past twelve months. The following figures show the results of enquiries made in January this year and last year; on each occasion, random samples of some 5,500 listeners were classified on a five-point scale. (A—great interest, B—moderate interest, C—neutrality, D—dislike, and E—strong dislike.)

Percentage of the listening public
classified as being in group—

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. January 1943	10	20	29	22	19	100
2. January 1944	17	24	26	19	14	100

As will be seen, there has been a pro-

nounced shift away from the unfavourable end of the scale towards the favourable end. Whereas a year ago 30% of the public could be classified as interested in some degree in Religious Talks and Discussions, as against over 40% who actively disliked them, now the figures are over 40% favourably disposed, as against 33% antagonistic.

REMEMBER AMERICA—MARCH 26

A Message from the President of the Methodist Conference

The President of the British Methodist Conference, Dr. L. F. Church, writes in *The Methodist Recorder* (March 9th):—

"The Methodist Church in the United States of America is about to pledge itself to a Crusade for a New World Order. Its Council of Bishops, under the chairmanship of Bishop Oxnam, has issued a manifesto urging every Methodist to write personally to his representatives in Congress and in the executive branch of the Government. By a continuous expression of opinion it is hoped to make the deepest religious conviction of the great American Methodist Church 'a creative and co-operative contribution' to the establishment of world peace. A series of mass meetings in a hundred great centres has been held during January. The theme has been: 'The Coming Peace and the Prince of Peace.'

"The initial stage of this Crusade, which we believe is of immense significance to the future of the world, will be reached on Sunday, March 26th, which is to be observed as a Day of Consecration. Here is the phrasing of the announcement:—

"It will be a consecration of "the people called Methodists" to Jesus Christ as Personal and World Saviour. Loyalty to Christ will be interpreted as the complete gift of self to our Lord, and the expression of that loyalty in support of those great moral measures designed to bring law, justice and brotherhood to a warring world. Upon the Day of Consecration the Church will proclaim, "He saves the individual. He must save the world."

"In consultation with the Rev. E. C. Urwin and the Rt. Hon. Isaac Foot, I decided to send a cable assuring Bishop Oxnam of the co-operation and prayers of British Methodists in the Crusade. The cable was read at all the mass meetings recently held. It seems to me that we should not stop there.

"In this letter I wish to commend to all Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland the cause to which our brethren in America are committing themselves. Further, I would like to call every British Methodist to observe

March 26th as a Day of Intercession, in which we unite with American Methodists in pledging ourselves to co-operate with them to further every effort to end war, to establish world order, economic and racial justice, and to guarantee individual freedom."

A NEW PASTORAL LETTER FROM DENMARK

News from Sweden reports an outspoken pastoral letter signed by Denmark's nine Bishops, which was read in churches throughout Denmark on Sunday, February 27th. The following is the account given in the Swedish paper, *Stockholms-Tidningen*:

"We condemn the fact that the Christian principles of justice firmly rooted in our people are being ignored. We are grieved that good Danish men, including our great author (Kaj Munk.—ED.), an intrepid servant of the Church, have been victims of the evil forces let loose among us. May our determination always to stand firm be constantly with us, so that the popular and national front will not be broken even when social questions come to the fore."

The pastoral letter concluded: "Let us always approach Almighty God with prayer. Let us, not only during the church service but also in our homes, pray for our King, our people and our country, and that a new day may arise over Denmark. Let us pray for our Nordic sister churches and for God's old chosen race, that He may help where we do not see any cure for all the suffering under brutal force and injustice; let us pray for all who have lost their freedom, for our deported fellow-countrymen and for those who, owing to the war, are separated from their homes and from us. May the spirit of Christ be victorious over all evil spirits, so that the day of peace may soon break over the whole of the suffering world. May God lead justice to victory, and let the spirit of reconciliation rule so that we may be prepared to receive Him who shall judge the quick and the dead, and to create a new Heaven and a new earth where justice prevails."

Funeral Demonstration

Another Swedish paper, *Svenska Morgonbladet*, of February 23rd, described the following events at the funeral of a Danish saboteur: "When the saboteur, Per Borup, of Aabenraa, was buried recently in Horsens, about 80 Gestapo men and German soldiers gathered outside the church during the funeral, which took place at an hour's notice, and ordered all the flags at half-mast to be lowered. During the funeral service the Germans raided the church porch, calling for

the clergyman, and stressing that only close relatives were permitted to follow the coffin to the grave. The clergyman replied that according to The Hague Convention the Wehrmacht had no right to interfere with the church service. In the sermon he described the saboteur as a Dane who had fallen for his country, demanding nothing but sacrificing everything for Denmark. Despite the German orders, several hundred people followed the coffin to the grave. The Germans intervened and threatened the mourners with revolvers. They also closed the cemetery, but in spite of this many people gathered round the grave."

INTERESTING CZECHOSLOVAK ACTIVITIES

In a broadcast to Czechoslovakia on Sunday, February 27th, 1944, the Rev. Dr. F. Hnik told his compatriots at home that members of the Czech and Slovak Protestant Churches, of the Czechoslovak Church, the Orthodox Church, and of other denominations, had met recently in London, on the eve of the Anglo-American assault on Europe, to prepare plans for post-war world order. He assured his listeners that in Britain and America, whatever the Nazis might say, there was complete agreement about Christian peace aims. Apart from plans for lasting international co-operation, Churches were ready to help in rebuilding Christian institutions in Europe. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Britain's Primate, and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland sent warm greetings to the conference, expressed their profound sympathy for the Czechoslovak people, and promised all possible help after the war in the Christian reconstruction of Czechoslovakia's national life. "These statements by leading church dignitaries," said Dr. Hnik, "are proof that the free world thinks of us with love in its heart and counts on the contribution which our church can make in building a temple of peace and justice."

A meeting of the Anglo-Czechoslovak Christian Fellowship was held on Wednesday, March 1st. The Archbishop of Canterbury was chief speaker. The Archbishop spoke on "Faith and Freedom," and in a masterly review of the historical turning points in the past said that the conception of freedom, which is defended by Great Britain and the United Nations to-day, is based on a living Christian faith, and that without such faith it is unlikely to endure.

A Conference was held in London on February 26th and 27th, 1944, which was attended by more than 50 members of the

various Evangelical denominations from Czechoslovakia. Members of the Czechoslovak Cabinet were present, Mr. Jan Masaryk, Dr. Juraj Slávik, General Viest and Mr. Lichner, and among others there were ten ministers of religion from various denominations.

The Conference was opened by Dr. F. M. Hnik, who described the heroic resistance of the persecuted Churches in Czechoslovakia and read messages from representatives of British Christendom, chief among which were those of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Chairman of the Conference, Professor Smetánka, gave an address, in which he spoke of the leaders of the Christian Churches who had passed away under the Nazi oppression. Reports about the attitude of the British and American Churches to World Order were given by Dr. Hnik and Professor Odlozilík, and in the afternoon the subject of the meeting and of the discussion was the reconstruction of Christian life and institutions in liberated Czechoslovakia, the speakers being the Rev. B. Vancura, the Rev. Dr. J. Caplovic and Dr. L. Ambrosová. On Sunday morning after Divine Service the Conference passed resolutions summarising the findings of the Conference and drew up the message for the Christian Churches at home.

NORWEGIAN INCIDENTS

Anti-Church Activity

The continuation of measures directed against the faithful Norwegian Church was reported from Stockholm in *Svenska Morgonbladet* of February 18th. The paper wrote: "Members of the N.S. have sent a letter to the Minister of Church Affairs asking him to order the police to prosecute those priests who continue to pray publicly for Bishop Berggrav, Professor Hallesby, and Pastor Hope, and for the other faithful who have been put in prison and persecuted.

"Organisations of the N.S. have proposed measures against these priests, but the authorities have not yet approved them, they have even criticised them. The Minister of Church Affairs does not dare to promulgate a general order on this subject because he fears that the religious position is so strong that such an order would have no success. This is the reason for a belief that things will remain much as they are. The Germans have forbidden the open continuation of the religious fight and they have demanded that the Nazi Norwegian authorities should contribute to the breaking down of the religious differences."

No Quisling Marriages

Stockholms-Tidningen states that "98 per cent. of all the marriages in Norway are civil marriages, generally followed by a so-called church blessing given by clergymen who do not belong to the N.S. The quisling bishops have repeatedly emphasised that ordinary church marriages are not prohibited, but very few people accept the offer of the quisling clergy to assist in their marriages."

Mixed Policies

Two further reports from Sweden show a peculiar approach to the problems which face the quisling Church authorities. *Eskilstuna-Kuriren* writes: "The Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs has now begun the curious practice of appointing Opposition clergymen, who temporarily hold vacant positions, as the permanent holders of these positions. The well-known clergyman Tybring of Uranienborg parish, Oslo, has thus been appointed dean of Uranienborg, but he says he cannot accept appointment by an authority which he does not recognise."

On the other hand, persecution of individuals continues. Thus *Aftonbladet* reports "that the quislingite State police have banned Bishop Maroni from preaching in the area from Kristiansand (South Norway) to Sirdal in Vestagder, and Bishop Skagestad from preaching in the area from Stavanger to Ardal in Ryfylke. Both were given very short notice to leave their homes. Pastor Kvási of Amot in Modum has been arrested by the State police and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for a negative remark about quislings."

FRENCH CHURCHES WARN LAVAL

News from Geneva, denying the announcement of a previous report that Cardinal Suhard and Pastor Marc Boegner had been summoned to Vichy, stated: "Suhard and Boegner themselves informed Laval of the growing feeling of public opinion at the mass deportations of French citizens who are not protected by any international convention, and in whom the Government gives the impression that it takes no interest."

The same source also reported: "A group of French prisoners of war has given a touching testimony to their attachment to the Church, by sending the Reformed Church at Lyons a parcel of flour saved up from their rations, with which they asked the Lyons Church to make bread for the Christian Communion, as a material symbol of the communion of the Church in Lyons and the Church behind the barbed wire in the same Bread and Body."